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Published November 1, 2007

Springfield day-care provider charged with murder

Morning update

Trace Christenson
The Battle Creek Enquirer

SPRINGFIELD - One month after the death of a 5-month-old child, a Springfield day-care provider has been charged with murder.

Ruthann Jarvis, 48, was arraigned Wednesday in Calhoun County District Court on charges of second-degree murder and second-degree child abuse in the Sept. 26 death of 5-month-old Damien Lewis.

Springfield Public Safety officers and the Calhoun County prosecutor have alleged Jarvis poisoned the child by giving him a drug.

Now police are searching for other children who were enrolled and might have been drugged, as well.

"The possibility exists that one of the other kids might have been given something," according to Rob Coles, Springfield Public Safety director. "What we would like to do is have a lab test the hair follicles of any children and look for any other toxic substances that the child might have been given."

Officer Kevin Callahan asked that any parents of children enrolled in the home day care at 31 Greenbriar Lane in Springfield, in the past year call him at 965-7795.

Coles said Wednesday one parent already has contacted the department.

The day care located in Jarvis' home was licensed by the state of Michigan for 12 children. At the time of the death of the child, Springfield police said five children were enrolled.

The license was suspended immediately after the boy died, but then reinstated for several days until last week, when the results of the toxicology report showed the drug in the child's system.

Police have not released the name of the drug.

At the arraignment, Magistrate Roger Graves told Jarvis she faced a penalty of up to life in prison if convicted. He ordered her held on \$200,000 cash bond and set a preliminary examination for Nov. 14.

Jarvis asked for a court-appointed attorney.

As the short hearing ended, Jarvis' son, Daniel, one of several friends and family who attended, shouted, "I love you, Mom."

Outside the courtroom, he declined to comment on the case.

Jarvis was arrested Tuesday after an interview with police, and Prosecutor John Hallacy told Graves that "the evidence against her is great, and she made a statement of her own culpability."

The baby, the son of James Lewis and Michelle O'Connor, was dropped off at the day care shortly after 7 a.m. Jarvis told investigators at the time that he was fed, burped, changed and put to bed. She discovered he was not breathing about 40 minutes later, she said. He was pronounced dead at Battle Creek Health System.

Police and a pathologist said they found no evidence of trauma and thought the death might be Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) until the laboratory results were completed.

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Article published Oct 31, 2007
Day-care provider arraigned for infant death
Trace Christenson
The Enquirer

SPRINGFIELD — An in-home day-care provider, Ruthann Jarvis, 48, was arraigned today on second degree murder and second degree child abuse charges in the death of 5-month-old Damien Lewis.

Jarvis was arrested yesterday as part of an ongoing investigation into the child's death, and was held overnight. Jarvis appeared in Calhoun County District Court today.

Bond was set at \$200,000 cash and Jarvis could be sentenced to up to life in prison if convicted of both charges.

Lewis, died Sept. 26 at Battle Creek Health System after Jarvis reported that morning the child was not breathing.

An autopsy did not immediately reveal a cause of death, but last week results of the toxicology study made the death suspicious and officers were continuing their investigation as a homicide.

The child had been at the day care about 40 minutes and had been fed and put down in the crib when Jarvis said he stopped breathing.

Police said at the time that Jarvis told officers she put the baby in a crib while caring for two other children in the same room when she found he was not breathing.

Look for the complete story Thursday in the Battle Creek Enquirer and online at battlecreekenquirer.com.



Toddler's death ruled homicide

GAYLORD — More than four months after her death, a recently completed autopsy report from the coroner's office at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing indicates 2-year-old Ella Rylin Westcott was the victim of a homicide.

According to Gaylord Chief of Police Joe FitzGerald, the forensic pathologist report ruled the cause of death for the Gaylord toddler as a homicide. He reported she died as the result of multiple blunt force injuries to the torso and abdomen area which lacerated the liver. FitzGerald's office received the report Thursday.

"There isn't a lot that this will add to our investigation because the main person of interest killed himself shortly after her death," FitzGerald said, referring to Thomas Harold Gardner, 24, of Gaylord. Gardner lived with Ella and her mother, Crystal Westcott, at 126 S. Illinois Ave. when the child died June 21.

FitzGerald said the investigation is still ongoing and once completed will be forwarded to the Otsego County prosecutor's office for review.

Gardner died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound June 26 at a Hayes Township residence, according to a news release from FitzGerald's department. Gardner's suicide came only an hour before he was to have met with investigators at the office of Gaylord attorney Elliot Blumberg to discuss the child's death.

"I had heard rumblings out there that the report had been completed," Blumberg said Tuesday. "When Tom and his mother met with me the day before he took his life he had denied any involvement in her death. He never gave any indication that he had harmed the child."

After her death, preliminary findings by officials with the City Police and the Gaylord Michigan State Police post, who were assisting in the investigation, led them to believe foul play may have been involved and they announced they were investigating Ella's death as a homicide.

Two or three days before she died, FitzGerald said, Westcott had taken a fall from some stairs. After the fall, the police chief said, she reportedly was treated and released from Otsego Memorial Hospital (OMH) for a head wound.

FitzGerald said that according to the autopsy report, that fall did not contribute to her death.

On the day of her death, City Police investigators responded to a 9-1-1 dispatch call to the South Illinois Avenue residence around 6:50 a.m. after a call from Westcott's mother. When first responders arrived, the 2-year-old reportedly was not breathing and was transported to OMH where she was pronounced dead.



Sex suspect back in court

Man acquitted of molesting 5 girls faces new charge

Of The Oakland Press

HOLLY TWP. A Holly Township man who was found not guilty of molesting five girls is facing new allegations of similar crimes. Dennis Raymond McCarthy, 63, has been charged with sexually abusing a 4-year-old boy.

He was arraigned Wednesday on two counts of first-degree and one count of second-degree criminal sexual conduct. "Mr. McCarthy denies the allegations in their entirety," said his attorney John Shea. Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Gary Muir said the alleged abuse occurred from summer 2006 to May 2007 when the boy, now 5, was alone with McCarthy at his house. Officials with the Department of Human Services received a complaint and referred the case to police in September, prompting an investigation.

McCarthy was charged in 2003 with multiple counts of criminal sexual conduct after five girls accused him of inappropriately touching them. The case went to trial and McCarthy was acquitted.

Muir called the new allegations disturbing.

"I guess the question always comes up, if a jury makes a decision that he's not guilty, and nothing ever happens after that, maybe they were right," Muir said. "But now (there's) a new allegation. ... Did they make the right decision?"

Shea said McCarthy has served as a youth wrestling referee and substitute teaches at the middle school level, something he's put on hold pending the outcome of the case. He is a retired General Motors Corp. technical illustrator.

There are no known instances of McCarthy being accused of abusing children before 2003.

Shea said some aspects of the latest allegation don't seem to add up.

"I do know that the child who is the complainant in this has a sister who is a few years older who has made no allegations, (and) that there's not any indication throughout the 63-year-old man's life that he's sexually attracted to males," Shea said. "There's a lot about this case that gives me pause." Muir said Oakland County prosecutors wouldn't have issued charges unless they felt that the child was credible. At his arraignment, McCarthy stood mute and a not guilty plea was entered on his behalf. Judge Dana Fortinberry of Clarkston's 52-2 District Court set bond at \$250,000, with the option to post 10 percent. He was still in jail as of early Wednesday afternoon.

McCarthy is set to return to court for a preliminary exam at 1:30 p.m. Monday.

It's unclear what role, if any, the previous allegations against him would play in this case if it went to trial.

Contact staff writer Ann Zaniewski at (248) 745-4628 or ann.zaniewski@oakpress.com.

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Muskegon Chronicle

Muskegon man charged in sex crime

Thursday, November 01, 2007

FROM LOCAL REPORTS

A 37-year-old Muskegon man is being held in jail without bond on a charge of first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Timothy Donald Smrcina of 1458 Division was arraigned Monday before 60th District Judge Harold F. Closz III on the sex count and a charge of being a fourth-time habitual offender. First-degree criminal sexual conduct is a felony punishable by up to life in prison.

According to court records, Smrcina has a 2005 conviction for larceny of between \$1,000 and \$20,000, a 1997 conviction for attempted second-degree criminal sexual conduct and a 1993 conviction for breaking and entering a coin-operated device.

A social worker contacted police after the victim, who is between the ages of 13 and 15, said Smrcina had been sexually assaulting her for several months.

Closz scheduled a preliminary examination for 11 a.m. Nov. 9.

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Article published Nov 1, 2007

EDITORIAL

Babies need to sleep by themselves, in own bed

During Infant Safe Sleep Month in September, we encouraged parents, grandparents and other caregivers to always take precautions when putting infants to bed.

But in light of the accidental deaths of two local babies within the past week, it is a message that bears repeating: Infants need a safe sleep environment free of potential hazards.

That means sleeping by themselves without any objects or other people.

Adults must be sure to stay awake and alert when breast-feeding or just holding a baby to sooth him or her. While it may seem comforting to lie down with a child, it can be dangerous. It simply is too easy to fall asleep, and an adult's sheer size can accidentally smother a baby within minutes.

According to the Michigan Department of Human Services, a baby should sleep alone in a crib that is safety approved and has a firm mattress with a tightly fitted sheet. As tempting as it might be, don't place any soft objects, blankets or bumper pads in the crib with the child. If you are worried about the baby getting cold, make sure to use warm sleep clothes rather than blankets.

It is important that babies sleep on their backs with nothing covering their faces. Studies have shown that sleeping on their backs greatly reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Infants also should sleep in a smoke-free environment.

While most people like to hug and "cozy up" with babies, sleeping with infants or surrounding them with plush, fuzzy objects can put them in danger. If a baby's face becomes buried in a toy, blanket or an adult's body, its air source is blocked and it is not yet able to raise its head or roll over to unblock it.

Statistics from the Michigan Child Death State Advisory Team underscore the importance of the DHS's recommendations. The advisory team reviewed 253 infant deaths in 2002 and 2003 and studied the sleeping environments. Just over half - 52 percent - were sharing their sleeping space with one or more persons.

These deaths were not intentional, but that does not make them any less tragic.

We all need to make sure that parents and caregivers of babies are aware of the need for children to sleep by themselves and to have safe sleeping environments.

It might help prevent heartbreak for a family.

County to determine if it can reverse decision to cut 6 positions

By SCOTT AIKEN
H-P Staff Writer

November 1, 2007

ST. JOSEPH — The state's new budget provides money to counties to replace cuts in federal funding for child support collection efforts. The \$9.57 million appropriation is expected to "make whole" enforcement programs that were hurt when the federal government put restrictions on the use of certain funding.

Berrien County anticipates receiving about \$191,000 as its share of the state funds, an amount equal to the federal reduction, said Friend of the Court Director Tom Watson.

"Overall, it's certainly good news," Watson said.

The Friend of the Court is an arm of Berrien County Trial Court responsible for enforcing court-ordered child support and overseeing other issues affecting children whose parents do not live together.

Berrien's FOC has a caseload of about 20,000 and collects some \$29 million in child support for custodial parents annually.

Watson said he does not yet know if the funding will mean cancellation of plans to eliminate six positions in the FOC office, some through layoff, or to close a satellite office in Niles.

"Clearly it's an opportunity to look at the decisions made," Watson said. "I don't want to state that everything gets put back the way it was."

Court officials were expected to meet with the county administrators this week to discuss the implications of the boost in funding.

The money can be used to leverage other federal child support enforcement funds at a ratio of 2-to-1, which means the \$191,000 will generate about \$573,000 for the Berrien FOC program.

In developing a 2008 general fund budget over the past few months, county officials did not assume the state would come up with money to replace the federal funds.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's budget included the funding, but Berrien County officials feared it would be cut out as the governor and Legislature sought ways to eliminate millions of dollars in spending.

Anticipating the loss, the county's \$49.94 million budget called for eliminating 27 positions, six of them in the FOC office. Officials also decided to close the FOC office at the South County Building in Niles. Of the six positions, three were vacant when the budget was developed. Recently, an FOC employee moved into a different county position, Watson said.

The FOC office had 47 positions a year ago, but the number was cut to 45 when two vacant slots were eliminated in the 2007 budget process. A further reduction of six employees would leave 39, and officials said that would hurt the office's effectiveness.

Watson warned county commissioners early in 2007 of the approaching cuts, required by the Federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, which changed the way federal incentive money could be used. Federal reimbursement covers 66 percent of FOC expenses, and the county pays 34 percent.

Contact Scott Aiken at saiken@heraldpalladium.com



THE BAY CITY TIMES

Neighbors mourn loss of woman fatally stabbed by boyfriend

Thursday, November 01, 2007

By **CRYSTAL McMORRIS**

charmon@bc-times.com | 894-9643

Neighbors in the Fairfield Manor mobile home park are mourning the loss of a woman who was fatally stabbed by her boyfriend on Tuesday night.

Debora Earixson, 43, died after her boyfriend, Kenneth Strauss, 52, stabbed her in the stomach, Bay County Sheriff John E. Miller said. Her 20-year-old son, who lived with her, called 911 sometime before midnight to report finding his mother on the kitchen floor of their Monitor Township home.

Strauss returned to his home at 9672 Mulberry Court, near Freeland, and shot himself in the head, Miller said. He'd left a suicide note admitting to killing Earixson.

"She was an awful sweet lady," said Dois Wilbanks, who lived next door to Earixson on Grouse Drive. "It's the first time that anything like that has happened here. I'm so sad, I am just heartbroken."

Earixson, a 1982 graduate of Bay City Western High School, made headlines in 2000 when she was awarded the \$5,000 Terry O'Banion Student Developer Champion Award for her achievements at Delta College, which included maintaining perfect grades at Delta College while being a single mother to two children and working a series of jobs, including housekeeper and roofer.

But Wilbanks said Earixson's studies were disrupted by a freak accident as she commuted to Delta several years ago.

"A car passed her, and a rock flew up and hit her in the head," Wilbanks said. "She lost hearing in her left ear and had some trouble with her memory. After that, she didn't work, that I know of."

In an interview in 2000 about her scholarship, one of Earixson's professors, Bob Hoag, said that Earixson's creativity, dedication and positive spirit helped her overcome adversity and find success.

For Strauss, Tuesday's murder-suicide was not the first time he'd shot himself after having troubles in a relationship.

According to a Bay County Sheriff's Office report, deputies were called to Strauss' former home in the 1100 block of E. Seidlers Road on July 15, 2000 after Strauss' sister called with concerns that he was suicidal.

Strauss had shot himself in the stomach with a 12-gauge shotgun loaded with bird shot, according to the incident report. His sister told deputies that Strauss was upset about his pending divorce and was receiving counseling and medication for mental illness. His ex-wife had obtained a personal protection order against Strauss in January 2001.

Strauss was the father of three children, records show.

Funeral arrangements were incomplete for Earixson and Strauss as of Wednesday afternoon.

Bay County has had three homicides in the past two years, according to Times files.

* On June 5, Rita M. Salogar, 83, died after being attacked in her home on Catherine Street.

Two teenagers, 16-year-old Shawn Commire and 19-year-old Robert M. Commire, face murder charges in connection with the crime. The Commires, who have not yet had a hearing on the evidence against them, will appear before Bay County District Judge Craig D. Alston at 8 a.m. Monday for a review of a competency evaluation.

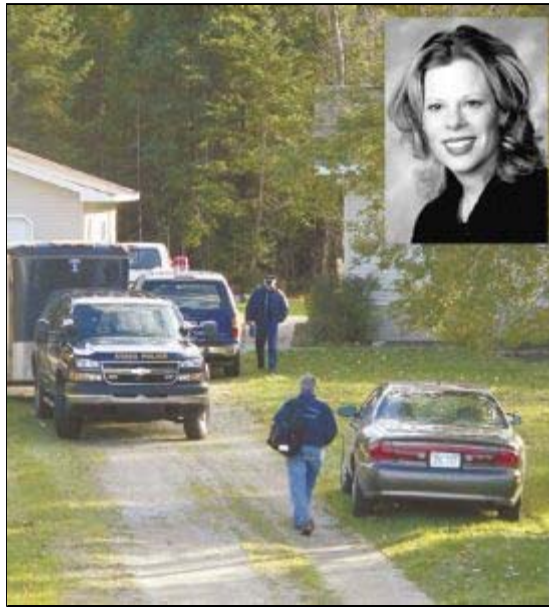
* In November 2006, the body of Dolores "Dee" Lubaczewski, 60, was found in her home on Van Buren Street. A co-worker, Howard Brown, is charged with murder and is awaiting trial on Nov. 27 before Bay County Circuit Judge Joseph K. Sheeran.

* In July 2005, Ricky Narvaiz was shot and killed at the Baytown apartment complex. Sinaca A. Times, a 23-year-old man, is serving a life sentence after being convicted of murdering Narvaiz.

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Man kills woman, self



The medical examiner for Delta County arrives at the home of Kristi Darmogray at 9135 U.S. 2 in Rapid River at 5:15 Wednesday afternoon to assist the State Police crime lab out of Marquette. Darmogray was the victim of what state police believe to be a murder-suicide at the hands of her boyfriend, Alan Hilary Szukalowski. (Daily Press photo by Lee F. Brown)

By Mary Ann Cancilla

mcancilla@dailypress.net

ENSIGN TOWNSHIP — Police are investigating what they believe is a murder-suicide following the discovery of two bodies at a residence 3 miles east of Rapid River Wednesday.

The bodies of Kristi Kay Darmogray, 30, and Alan Hilary Szukalowski, 38, were found by family members around 11 a.m. Wednesday, said Michigan State Police Sgt. George Sailer at the Gladstone Post.

Family members checked the residence after Darmogray — a nurse practitioner at OSF St. Francis Medical Group — didn't report for her 10 a.m. shift Wednesday.

Initial investigations reveal Darmogray was the victim of gunshot wounds and Szukalowski was the victim of what appears to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Officials believe the incident happened after midnight Oct. 31.

"It appears initially to be a murder-suicide," Sailer said, who added the incident occurred inside the home, where both victims resided.

Sailer said it is believed a handgun was used. There was no known history of domestic violence, according to Sailer.

The Michigan State Police's Marquette Forensic Laboratory was called in to process the scene and collect and analyze evidence. Autopsies were scheduled for 9 a.m. today.

State Police were assisted by the Delta County Sheriff's Department, Escanaba Public Safety and the Hannahville Police Department.

Darmogray, a 1995 graduate of Gladstone High School, was an employee of OSF St. Francis Hospital since December 2004.

"She's been working with us for a while," OSF Administrator Peter Jennings said. "She was very present in the community."

Jennings said Darmogray worked in various parts of the hospital, including Women's Center, the Walk-in Center and in physician's offices.

"She was loved by all," he added.

Jennings said the hospital's purpose is to serve the community with the greatest care and love.

"Kristi was a great example of making that care come to life," he said.

Grief counseling is available today for OSF employees, and not just those who worked alongside Darmogray, but for anyone who needs it, Jennings said.

Jennings said he communicated with employees about the incident Wednesday, and will follow-up with that today.

"This is the second caregiver that OSF has lost in a short time," he said.

Lisa Hanson, a registered nurse in the emergency department at OSF St. Francis Hospital, was killed in an ambulance accident March 5 while assisting in the transport of a critically ill patient to Marquette General Hospital.

"It's a great loss," Jennings said. "We do understand we need to take care of our patients, in spite of the challenges presented to us. An example of Kristi and Lisa's love of patients will help us face those challenges."

Keep food pantries from going hungry

Posted by [Jackson Citizen Patriot](#) October 31, 2007 10:58AM

Categories: [Editorial](#)

The following is the [Jackson Citizen Patriot's](#) editorial for October 31:

We know you've heard it before: The economy means this will be a difficult winter for local charities. The list of those in need is longer than most of us care to imagine.

So, don't be overwhelmed by it all. Don't close your eyes. Start making a difference with a can of soup. Or a box of crackers.

Local food pantries are finding themselves stuck with high demand but a lack of food on their shelves. It's possible that some actually will run out of food.

We'd say people should give more, but we know that can be a challenge. Many of us face our own financial crunches, or are paring back on how much we spend. Charity is much easier when we have something to give.

But we may have more to give than we realize. Columnist Brad Flory, his wife and two children are finishing this month on a food budget of \$518. It's part of a challenge to live on a food-stamp budget, but it illustrates the potential for what we can pare from our lives. Brad says he and his family have not gone hungry, although they have eaten cheaply.

A local food pantry can buy a pound of food for less than a quarter. If it matters enough to you, there's a way you can give something of value to one of Jackson County's 30 pantries.

Charities' leaders are aware that people may tune out their pleas for help, and are reaching out to donors. The Salvation Army will open up its food pantry to visitors at noon Nov. 29, and even will serve a light lunch. How's that for generosity? If you're interested, call 782-7185.

One thing's for certain: Food pantries' need for help won't go away for quite a while. You can look past that fact — or you can find a way to give something. Even the tiniest morsel.

— Jackson Citizen Patriot



Warm the Children gets big donation

Thursday, November 01, 2007

By Christina Hildreth

childreth@citpat.com -- 768-4924

Warm the Children has received its annual \$10,000 corporate donation from Meijer, bringing total donations for the charity this year to \$21,134.

Add that to the \$19,000 left over from last year's program and Warm the Children has more than \$40,134 to help local low-income families buy winter clothing for their children.

Donations will help keep volunteers such as Lori Lehman busy. Lehman and her daughter, Shandra Rutkowski of Jackson, plan to help 30 families shop this year.

"It takes about eight hours," said Lehman, a Napoleon resident. "We set the families up on one day, back to back, and we just do one right after the other."

Lehman said she has a special system to make sure the families shop efficiently. She asks them to show up at the store about 30 minutes ahead of time to pick out their clothes. Lehman and her daughter then take the families to one of the U-Scan systems inside the store, which gives price information for each item. They add up the prices to bring the families as close as possible to the allowable \$83.

"If we're close, within a couple of dollars, we'll take mittens or socks so they can get close," Lehman said.

At Community Action Agency, organizer Shari Butters said she's been getting lots of calls to register for the program. Registration is closed, Butters said, so she must turn away dozens of interested families.

More than 900 children are enrolled in the program this year, which means fundraisers have a way to go. But that doesn't deter Lehman.

"I just think that it's a good idea to go out and help with the community," she said. "I like helping the families."

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Budget outcome: Spending grows

State lawmakers maintain raises, jobs, programs

November 1, 2007

BY CHRIS CHRISTOFF and KATHLEEN GRAY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

LANSING -- Gov. Jennifer Granholm and 148 lawmakers ended nine months of haggling over the state's budget crisis by essentially agreeing to preserve the status quo.

They settled early Wednesday on a \$9.8-billion general fund budget, up \$760 million from the previous budget year. After agreeing Oct. 1 to raise \$1.3 billion in new taxes, the Legislature trimmed \$435 million from the budget Granholm proposed in February.

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The final outcome was a matrix of snipping here, adding there and avoiding wholesale cuts that would furlough state workers, leave thousands without government-paid health care or cut money to schools.

Granholm's view -- that even in times of economic duress, government services should be preserved as much as possible, even at the cost of a large tax increase -- shows clearly in the result. She said that, to attract new businesses, the state has to spend the money to maintain its quality of life.

The budget agreement, she said Wednesday, will create "calmer seas" for the state's economic recovery.

"It's good we were able to protect public education and health care, and public safety, which is one of the principles we had going into these negotiations and into this very challenging time," she said.

Most of the belt-tightening occurred in spending on public schools, universities and prisons, she said.

Money for public schools will increase about 1% instead of the 2.5% she had called for in February.

Medicaid takes big bite

Meanwhile, Medicaid spending will increase a whopping \$373 million, about 40% coming from state tax dollars.

Asked about the disparity in Medicaid and education increases, Granholm deflected the question.

"The state has a priority of both education and assuring that people with disabilities, and senior citizens and children have health care when they most need it," she said.

"It suggests health care and education are priorities for the state, and that will continue to be the priority of this administration."

Free market think tank Mackinac Center sees things differently.

Analyst Jack McHugh said the budget protects state workers' pay and government programs rather than positioning the state for economic growth.

"Per capita personal income is down, we have the highest unemployment in nation, and yet Lansing's actions demonstrate their highest priority was to maintain the status quo of government operations," McHugh said.

"State employees will get a pay raise. There were no transformational changes in the way state programs are run or how employee benefits are distributed."

Budget outcome: Spending grows

Lawmakers boost expenses

The Legislature, in fact, raised the budget for its own spending on employees and programs by 2.9%.

Sharon Parks of the Michigan League for Human Services said the budget protects the poor and the vulnerable who rely on state assistance. But she questioned the agreement to shift more state-run foster care and juvenile offender programs to private agencies.

The budget agreement won't end controversy. A coalition of business groups today will kick off a campaign to repeal the new sales tax on services, a key part of the budget plan.

At first glance, the budget deal can seem a contradiction of lofty goals and real spending:

- The last budget was balanced using nearly \$1 billion in one-time revenue fixes, such as money from the tobacco lawsuit. That money wasn't available for this budget but lawmakers weren't willing to make a billion dollars worth of cuts and that hole had to be filled.
- After \$52 million in cuts to Granholm's original proposal for the Department of Community Health, the department's overall budget increases 7.6%. Medicaid alone consumes \$8.5 billion to provide health care to more than 1.5 million Michiganders, many in nursing homes. That compares to the \$9.8 billion in basic state aid to all school districts.
- After cutting \$80 million from the Department of Human Services, a 6% cut in state tax support, lawmakers agreed to increase the number of DHS employees by 190, even after eliminating half the beds at W.J. Maxey Boys Training Center. Net increase: \$45 million.
- After withholding \$138 million from universities last fiscal year, the state will repay them. Still, there's virtually no net increase for the state's 15 public universities compared with what they started with last fiscal year.
- State spending on public schools remains unchanged, about \$13 billion. But school districts will be able to spend from \$48 to \$96 per pupil more. Why? Because of increases in local property taxes on businesses.

Parks said what seems like an increase isn't if it doesn't keep up with rising costs. "It's like getting a raise from your employer, while your insurance, gasoline and housing costs go up," she said. "The raise doesn't put you ahead."

Fiscal problems remain

At the Center for Michigan, an Ann Arbor think tank, officials say the state still faces continuing fiscal problems.

"They're going to be right back at it for the next several years because they haven't dealt with structural reforms," executive director John Bebow said. He referred especially to the lack of change on prison spending and public employee health care benefits and retirement.

While the Legislature nudged school districts to cut the cost of employee health care, most experts say real savings are years away.

A significant factor in the larger 2007-08 budget is employee pay raises governed by union contracts. About 36,500 state workers received a 2% pay raise in October and will get another 2% in April.

State labor unions have tentative agreements on a three-year contract. Details were unavailable Wednesday.

Thomas White, executive director of the Michigan Association of School Business Officials, said the public might falsely believe that schools' fiscal problems are solved.

"They'll start to wonder when their district is laying people off or 'Why are they asking me to pay more for my kids to play sports?' " he said.

Lower-spending school districts will get a \$96 per-pupil increase, while high-end districts will receive \$48 more.

"We're very sympathetic to the other side of the equation, given Michigan's economy," White added. "But we've gotten increases that are significantly less than inflation over the last five years."

Contact **CHRIS CHRISTOFF** at 517-372-8660 or christoff@freepress.com.

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IN OUR OPINION**Hard work still ahead on state budget**

November 1, 2007

It's good to heave a sigh of relief over Lansing's long-awaited budget agreement for the current fiscal year, even allowing that it took one brief state shutdown on the way to a \$1.3-billion tax increase and another month's delay to whittle away \$440 million in potential spending.

But this has to be one short breather, because lots of heavy lifting remains.

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The final budget has two good aspects. First is the 1% increase for schools, from the elementary to university level. That's an important statement of the priority that education must take even when the economic chips are down.

Second, this budget is the first in a half-dozen years that contains virtually no gimmicks -- no cleaning out of other accounts, no revaluing of pension funds, no borrowing against future tobacco settlement money, among other tricks that have been deployed.

That hardly means the state is home free. Costs for items such as retiree health care will continue to outpace economic growth. A forecast from the Citizens Research Council suggests that state government costs will continue to pull ahead of tax receipts at a rate of about 5% a year. Despite the number of them who are term-limited, it is the duty of lawmakers and the governor to work on fixes now that put the state on more solid fiscal footing.

For starters, the Department of Human Services needs to closely track the increasing privatization of foster care work. In general, it seems better to keep workers who deal with vulnerable children under direct state management. But if the results show otherwise, Democrats as well as Republicans will have to look at more outsourcing.

The state also must deal with the structure of retiree health care and other problems that result from Michigan being an aging state with high legacy costs. Even in the shorter term, Michiganders have to worry that the economy has not yet hit bottom, and that the current budget won't even survive as written until next Sept. 30.

Still, given the seriousness with which lawmakers worked out spending cuts Tuesday night into Wednesday morning, at least voters now know what really puts a fright into them: not being home for Halloween.

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CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS

4:01 pm, October 31, 2007

Opponents of service tax to start petition drive for repeal

By [Amy Lane](#)

A coalition of business interests opposed to Michigan's new 6 percent tax on services plans a Thursday kickoff of a petition drive for repeal, and Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson is expected to be part of the effort.

Ax the Tax Coalition spokesman Matt Resch said Patterson offered to become involved in the campaign. In the near term, the coalition of trade associations, chambers of commerce and employers hopes to persuade lawmakers to repeal the tax before it starts Dec. 1.

But if the Legislature doesn't act, the coalition wants to place the repeal ☐ on the statewide ballot.

The coalition on Thursday is scheduled to announce the launch of its petition drive and its upcoming campaign Web site, axthetax.com.

Meanwhile, **Detroit Renaissance Inc.** has weighed in, in support of the service-tax repeal. The organization of high-powered CEOs on Tuesday sent a statement to Gov. Jennifer Granholm and legislative leaders, saying the tax "will hurt Michigan's economic competitiveness and add excessive administrative and compliance burdens on businesses and government alike."

Detroit Renaissance calls for full repeal of the tax and said it supports replacing the service-tax revenue through the Michigan Business Tax. The organization does not want the entire MBT reopened but supports adjusting the business tax to replace revenue that would have been generated by taxing services.

As *Crain's* has reported, some business groups are exploring a surcharge on the MBT to produce replacement revenue. However, Detroit Renaissance President Doug Rothwell told *Crain's* on Wednesday that his group is not specifying how the MBT should be changed.

"We really felt that the Legislature should be able to work with the individual business sectors that would be affected by this," Rothwell said. "We were more concerned about getting rid of the service tax, which we think is a problem" for several reasons, Rothwell said.

Among the concerns, he said: It is "counterintuitive to tax a sector of the economy that's growing and adding jobs," businesses face compliance issues and costs with the new tax, and the scope of its effect is still being determined.

"For business, it's very unpredictable," Rothwell said.

Earlier this week, the **Michigan Chamber of Commerce** said a poll of chamber members found nearly 90 percent of respondents in support of a repeal of the service tax.

In a news release, Tricia Kinley, the chamber's director of tax policy and economic development, said the findings "reaffirm our belief that the new service tax will harm Michigan's recovery, not help it, by driving away businesses that are already here as well as out-of-state employers looking for a more business-friendly environment."

Meanwhile, House Republicans on Wednesday called for government reforms and other measures to fill the budget gap if the service tax is repealed. The Republican proposal to enable repeal of the tax includes cutting lawmakers' pay, capturing one-time additional revenue from the MBT, changing state employee benefits and Medicaid eligibility, and enacting reforms in corrections and the **Michigan Department of Human Services**.

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Engler tax cuts did no good for Michigan

Posted by [Jackson Citizen Patriot](#) November 01, 2007 10:31AM

Categories: [Voice of the People](#)

JACKSON — I'm having a hard time figuring out what planet some letter writers have been living on.

Joe Munie ([Oct. 14](#)), for example, says Gov. John Engler pushed to reduce the state income tax in 1999 and "an excellent economy ensued and taxes poured in to the treasury."

The truth is, Engler and the Republicans promised us their tax cuts would jump-start Michigan's economy and put us on a road to prosperity.

In fact, they brought us to near ruin. Michigan lost 170,000 manufacturing jobs between 1999 and 2006, most in the automotive industry. The state's median income fell by 12 percent.

That, and Engler's selfish and politically motivated tax cuts, wiped out Michigan's surplus funds, damaged our ability to help our neediest citizens and ultimately led to near bankruptcy.

Global change and errors in the automotive industry are outside of the powers of state government.

What government can and must do is provide a safety net of housing, food and medical care for those caught up in economic dislocation, support education to prepare laid-off workers and our children for jobs in a changed world, and build and maintain the infrastructure that will help Michigan attract and keep jobs.

Rather than blaming Gov. Jennifer Granholm, we should be thanking her for taking the political heat and working to restore the prosperity and reputation of one of the finest states in the union.

— *Glenn Atkin*



ourMidland.com
from the Midland Daily News

10/31/2007

Moore: Don't lease new building for State Police headquarters

State Rep. Tim Moore on Tuesday called on Gov. Jennifer Granholm to scrap plans to lease a new Michigan State Police headquarters building in downtown Lansing.

Moore, R-Farwell, asked how the state can afford such a project when it is closing important crime labs and laying off police staffers.

Moore joined other House lawmakers in a Lansing news conference on the topic.

"We need state troopers on the road and in our communities, not a headquarters building that is unnecessary. Lawmakers have been working to balance spending budgets by reducing spending, and then there's this project that will use \$100 million of taxpayers' money. It's wasteful spending, and it needs to be stopped," he said.

According to Moore's office, a private developer will build the new MSP building and lease it to the state for \$3.7 million per year for the next 25 years. The state pays \$1 a year to lease the current MSP headquarters building in East Lansing, and that lease does not expire until 2030, Moore's office added.

Although in need of repair, the current headquarters building reportedly is fully functional and structurally sound.

The director of state police has expressed concerns about whether the project is necessary, according to Moore's office.

Moore said that at the planned site there's no room for an emergency operations center or a helicopter landing pad, and no space to warehouse vehicles.

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Published November 1, 2007

Lansing City Council candidates

Robert Clark

- Age: 22
- Family: Single
- Time in Lansing: Five years
- Occupation: Lansing Community College physical plant employee
- Education: Gaylord High School and class work at both Michigan Technological University and Lansing Community College
- Priorities: Bringing people back to Lansing, smart economic growth, a fair review of the city's taxing system, crime
- Why running: "I love the city of Lansing. There's so much going on. Also, there's so much that's not going on. We're in a state of stall. If you need to chalk it up to one thing or another, it would be civic duty. I feel compelled and obligated to do the right thing for the city."

Gina Nelson

- Age: 49
- Family: Divorced, no children
- Time in Lansing: 13 years
- Occupation: Case worker for Michigan Department of Human Services
- Education: Powers-North Central Area High School in the Upper Peninsula and Lansing Community College, certificate in labor relations
- Priorities: Fiscal responsibility, economic growth, change in the status quo
- Why running: "I've actually been thinking about doing this for several years."

Derrick Quinney

- Age: 52
- Family: Wife Desiree and two adult children.
- Time in Lansing: Entire life
- Occupation: Health and safety director for the Michigan AFL-CIO

- Education: Lansing's former Harry Hill High School and some class work at Lansing Community College
- Priorities: Public safety, neighborhoods, jobs, the city's public schools
- Why running: "I want to be part of the process. I want to be part of the change. Lansing's been good to me."

Carol Wood

- Age: 57
- Family: Two adult sons and two grandchildren
- Time in Lansing: About 50 years
- Occupation: Self-employed consultant
- Education: Lansing's Sexton High School and the University of Alaska
- Priorities: Sustainable neighborhoods, housing stock, perceived safety and neighborhood watch.
- Why running: "There are things that I have to offer to the community. And there are still things that I want to see done."

On The Web

See www.lsj.com/electionguide for election coverage and candidate questionnaires.

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Tragedy may touch Lansing City Council campaign

Wood says death of her mother 'affected a number of people'

Susan Vela
Lansing State Journal

Incumbent Carol Wood may have an emotional edge in the race for a four-year, at-large seat on the Lansing City Council.

Her mother, Ruth Hallman, a 76-year-old community activist, died because of an assault on July 26, Wood's birthday.

"It can't help but come up," Wood said of her campaigning leading to the Nov. 6 election. "This affected a number of people."

Four candidates - incumbents Wood, 57, and Derrick Quinney, 52, and newcomers Gina Nelson, 49, and Robert Clark, 22 - are competing for leadership jobs that will pay about \$20,000 annually. Two seats are open.

Wood, an eight-year veteran, said strong neighborhoods with quality schools and decent-paying

jobs make for a strong city.

How safe people feel is another major concern of hers.

Quinney has served less than a year on the council.

He was appointed to replace Joan Bauer, a new state representative.

The Michigan AFL-CIO health and safety director is interested in building strong neighborhoods so that his children and grandchildren can have the Lansing that he grew up in.

"Parents looked out for you, and we all worked together to make our neighborhoods vibrant and strong," he said.

Quinney's very interested in the city schools, which can determine a child's future opportunities.

Call for change

So far, he likes what he sees in new Lansing Superintendent T.C. Wallace Jr., who has implemented a closed-campus high school lunch period and promised strict discipline for the Everett High School football players who fought with opponents earlier this month.

"I think he's doing a great job ... in a month and a half," said Quinney, who promotes a spirit of togetherness among the city's public education, business, labor and religious communities.

Gina Nelson is interested in change.

"We need to have people with positive attitudes," said Nelson, who sits on the mayor's diversity committee.

As a caseworker for the Michigan Department of Human Services, she talks about budgets every day. There are the conversations about bills, bank accounts, roof repairs and foreclosures.

"I understand how budgets work," she said. "I understand how you do business."

Clark, an Eagle Scout and the only candidate in his 20s, hopes voters will pay more attention to his honesty and integrity than his young face.

"Even though I'm young, do not mistake my age for a lack of devotion," he said. "We have to be fiscally responsible. We have to investigate where the money is going."

Retaining and attracting home-owners, taxing residents fairly and strengthening the city's Neighborhood Watch program are some of his goals.

Don't be like Flint

He also proposes tax breaks for companies that reach a certain number of employees or have a certain number of employees living in the city.

"We can really use the tax structure to shape the economic development," Clark said.

"If we're not careful, Lansing will become like Flint."

Hazel Hotwagner, owner of the Haze Inc. gallery in Old Town, said she would like the council to break down the barriers between downtown and Old Town and promote the two city sections working together. Perhaps, one day, there could be trolley traffic between the two.

"We're all the same community," Hotwagner said.

Contact Susan Vela at 702-4248 or svela@lsj.com.

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Lansing Elections: City Council & LCC



Written by Kyle Melinn

City Pulse

Wednesday, 31 October 2007

There once was an aggressive rookie mayor who, anxious to rid himself of a pain in the neck on Lansing City Council, actively supported a candidate to run against and defeat the aforementioned annoyance.

The Mayor: David Hollister. The alleged pain: Ellen Beal. The year: 1995. The result: Beal not only won, Hollister's preferred candidate, Joan Bauer knocked out a Hollister ally on Council, Bob Brockwell.

The trip down memory lane isn't a prediction of what may happen Tuesday when Lansing voters go the polls to fill four slots on Lansing City Council, but it shows Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero isn't exactly breaking new ground by tapping local Democratic Party activist Gina Nelson to run against popular two-term incumbent Carol Wood in this election.

Like Hollister in 1995, Bernero initially approached the mid-year city elections as a referendum on his power as a two-year mayor to influence the makeup of the city's legislative body.

The big Nelson push the Bernero operation once pledged to produce, however, never happened — maybe out of respect for Wood, who lost her mother, Ruth Hallman, this summer in a well-publicized murder. Maybe because with the alleged Matthew Macon murder spree and recent flurry of downtown development announcements, Bernero doesn't want to overplay his hand. Maybe because he realized such an effort would be futile.

The benefactor could be the Bernero-backed incumbent, Derrick Quinney, appointed 10 months ago to replace Bauer, now a state representative. Robert Clark, a 22-year-old Lansing Community College student, is the fourth candidate running for two open at-large Council seats.

Meanwhile, the Bernero-Wood dynamic is being played out in the two other Council races, albeit very much behind the scenes. While neither camp openly talks about it, it's clear the two-year mayor prefers Lansing City Council President Harold Leeman in the 1st Ward and the recently appointed Bill Matt of the 3rd Ward on the Council, who he seems to work well with.

Wood, on the other hand, liked Matt's opponent, A'Lynne Robinson, when the latter came one Council vote from replacing Randy Williams this past spring. Wood also wouldn't be caught sobbing if Eric Hewitt is successful against Leeman, who muscled out Wood's lone sure-fire Council ally, Brian Jefferies, earlier this year for Council president.

At-Large Seats

Wood and Quinney have clear fundraising advantages going into the campaign's final week. Wood reported in her Oct. 26 filing as having raised \$33,702. The union-backed Quinney raised his \$27,805 early and has since shut down his fundraising operation to focus on door-to-door and voter outreach.

Nelson's fundraising dried up shortly after the primary, having raised only \$655 over the last six weeks, giving her \$16,235. She's spent all but \$4,277 of it, but did have a final fundraiser Oct. 23. Clark recently paid a \$30 fine for not filing his late summer campaign finance paperwork on time

by not filing his Oct. 26 paperwork on time.

On Bernero's plan to install a handful of video cameras throughout the city to deter crime in specific trouble spots, Wood and Clark are "no" votes, with Nelson voicing support. Quinney said he doesn't have a problem with the idea, but would prefer the cameras come only after more police are hired.

Wood said her research shows cameras help thwart property crimes but do little against violent crime or public disorder. Clark wondered aloud who would be paid to monitor the cameras and from which budget. Neighborhood watch programs and volunteer programs are preferable to Clark.

As someone who had dealt with a stalker, Nelson said she'd feel safer with cameras being installed in certain areas. Quinney said the personal interaction residents get from a police officer is always a better way to go than cameras, but he didn't dismiss them out of hand, either.

Asked what issues need the city's attention outside of downtown redevelopment, Wood said "balance" is necessary to prevent the loss of neighborhood pockets and the commercial strips those residents, a sentiment Clark agreed with.

"If we don't have the neighborhoods, we can't have a downtown," Clark said. "We need to make sure they have jobs to go to, local businesses to shop at, and that really is where much of our tax base is."

Nelson said she's sympathetic to the "screaming" in the Logan Center area on the south side over the need to bring that commercial center back to life. The riverfront, she said, also needs attention. Quinney said Lansing is entering a new day with the departure of the city's two main automobile plants. It's going to take the collaborative efforts of everybody – General Motors, the unions, and the neighborhoods to bring redevelopment to all of Lansing.

On creating mayor-Council harmony, Quinney said all city leaders need to "realize what the prize is," put egos aside, communicate and work together for the city's good. Nelson said she's never agreed with Bernero 100 percent, but when they've had differences, they've been able to air them out face-to-face and move on.

Wood pointed out that asking hard questions should never been seen as being argumentative. Last year Wood took 608 council votes and voted no only 18 times, proof that she supported many mayoral proposals. She admitted Bernero has a "different style" than Hollister, who used to regularly brief Council members, but she isn't apologizing for seeking information.

Clark said, "I think it's important to have important discussions and to go over issues. I think it's essential to democracy."

1st Ward

Lansing City Council President Harold Leeman, a 12-year-incumbent, is trying to fend off an aggressive challenge from energetic northsider Eric Hewitt, who entered the race this winter with barrels blazing.

Hewitt, a Michigan Department of Human Services analyst and Old Town volunteer, has given voice to a perceived growing frustration in the First Ward that a lethargic Leeman is growing less responsive to constituent concerns.

The political newcomer's campaign has focused on tying this general theme of Leeman inactivity

to just about anything the Council president has done lately, from the Human Rights Ordinance to stronger housing standards to late-night police protection.

By and large, Leeman has found himself on the defensive, having to explain in detail why the gears of government don't always spin at optimal efficiency. Hewitt's criticism of the personally likeable Leeman has been persistent, potentially too much so, which raises the question of whether the negativity is being spread a little too thick.

On individual issues, Hewitt wants to strengthen the city's role in condemning vacant, deteriorating homes as a way to control the spread of blight. Leeman said he doesn't think bulldozing is the be-all-to-end-all answer and would like to work more with non-profits and the Ingham County Land Bank Authority to "reinvest in neighborhoods."

Hewitt wants to see a new commercial code on the books that gives the city the power to go after businesses that don't take care of their properties. Leeman says the city's code needs upgrading, but he's been pleased with progress he's seeing in enforcement.

Police protection, particularly on the third shift, is lacking in Hewitt's eyes. He said constituents tell him late-night service can be a long, frustrating experience. Leeman said the Council is always trying to fit another new police officer or two into the state's shrinking budget, but funding is always a balancing act.

In general, Leeman said he likes using surveillance cameras to fight crime as long as privacy and civil liberty issues are addressed. Hewitt is much more skeptical, saying the technology police currently have should be improved before working the cameras into an overall police plan of action.

Hewitt paints a pessimistic picture of Michigan Avenue redevelopment, saying it's been "lagging" due to a lack of leadership and the ability for someone to bring the necessary parties to the table for action. Leeman doesn't see it that way, claiming the mayor's office is working with Lansing Township and East Lansing on an overall plan.

Leeman boasts the endorsements of the UAW CAP Council, the firefighters' union, the local Teamsters, IBEW, MEA and the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. Hewitt's backing is coming from the local AFL-CIO.

3rd Ward

Possibly the most closely watched city race is in Lansing's south side, where Jackson school official A'Lynne Robinson is putting up a formidable challenge to sitting Council member Bill Matt, who was appointed in April to succeed Williams, who resigned for health reasons.

Matt won the appointment over Robinson by a split Council vote and has quickly earned himself a reputation among his colleagues as a quick study and a hard worker. The MSU Museum program director is finding support among some of the area's bigger players, but his name recognition within the ward arguably is not as strong as Robinson's, which makes his election far from a sure thing.

Robinson, like Matt, grew up on the south side, but is still known through her various activities in the Lewton-Rich neighborhood and those of her father, well-known Realtor John Boles, and her husband, Earle Robinson Jr.

Matt raised \$18,705 for his election and had \$9,242 going into the Nov. 6 election. Of that, about 20 percent, \$3,748, came out of his own pocket. Those having cut him a check include former

Lansing Mayor David Hollister, car dealer Ralph Shaheen, Ingham County Commissioner Rebecca Bahar-Cook and City Clerk Chris Swope. The support is impressive, but none of the aforementioned actually live in the 3rd Ward.

On the other hand, Robinson raised \$3,705 and carried only \$677 into the campaign's final week. Her biggest financial supporter is MSU Board of Trustees Chairman Joel Ferguson, but the number of donors she included on her campaign reports are far more than Matt's. Also, the bulk of these small-dollar contributions came from in-ward residents.

Robinson and Matt had much different takes on the Bernero administration's not taking City Council into its confidence when it comes to sharing information on potential development deals, like the Accident Fund/Board of Water and Light Building deal. Matt was much more understanding, noting that sometimes negotiations, particularly for business deals, can be "tenuous." The last thing anybody needs is a premature media story blowing up an entire project, he said, suggesting Council members might have leaked the news.

Robinson was much more bothered by the idea, saying it's "definitely unfortunate" the mayor's office wouldn't trust the Council with such sensitive information, particularly when communication and partnership is such an important part of moving the city forward. "I don't think anyone currently sitting on the Council would merit that type of distrust," she said. "I just don't."

On the prospects of a southside community center, Matt said he'd rather go with a 10-year millage for a centrally located center as opposed to going with the Harry Hill Center, which he said is too far to the west. Robinson said some money has already been set aside for the project and any proposal should stay within those means as much as possible.

The two are on opposite sides of the theoretical casino debate, with Matt seeing a riverfront gaming facility as putting Lansing on even footing with Mount Pleasant and Detroit, while Robinson has basically said such a facility would be more trouble than it's worth.

The two also split on the endorsement front, Matt scoring the backing of the UAW, Teamsters, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Great Labor Council and the firefighters' union. Robinson earned the support the Michigan Education Association and the Fraternal Order of Police.

LANSING ELECTIONS

LCC

For the better part of an hour, seven candidates Lansing Community College Board of Trustees spent their designated time at the League of Women Voters forum earlier this fall digging into the currently "dysfunctional" board.

The current board, like the one before it and the one before it, had found itself in the headlines more than a community college board deserves to be in the headlines, for such things as forcing out administrators and deeper forms of micromanagement when the college wasn't exactly running smoothly

The seven candidates took turns talking about bringing better communication and camaraderie to the Board, with the word "retreat" being used about as often as "collaboration" and "teamwork."

Among those in the sparse crowd was LCC Board Chairman Chris Laverty, who listened to the harsh critique, with very little visible reaction. After it was over, Laverty was asked if he found the candidates' comments offensive.

"Not at all," Laverty smiled. "I said the same things when I was running for this job four years ago."

So what is it about the LCC board that transforms the well meaning and optimistic into the seemingly petty? At least one prominent Lansing public official suggested it's the "big-fish, little-pond" syndrome, where upwardly mobile-minded politicians make more of the job than it really is. Others have suggested personality conflicts, power grabs, etc. But whatever the cause, the fact remains that while many like to see good news about LCC reported, the best news often doesn't include the names of the board.

This year marks the first time the public will elect LCC board members in November with the Lansing City Council as opposed to May with school mileages. It also marks the first time in recent years where as many as 16 candidates have filed to run for three open seats on the seven-member board.

Twelve candidates, including one incumbent, are running for two six-year spots and four candidates are running for the remainder of one two-year term.

Once again, a "slate" of candidates was put together to give the public an easy avenue to find individuals who could work together with a common interest.

This year's only slate, however, was put together by six-month appointed board member Jerry Hollister, not the producer of the last several LCC Board of Trustees slates – the area's more powerful unions. The unions endorsed Hollister and fellow "slate" member Edward Woods III, but they are backing in the two-year race Lawrence Hidalgo, a long-time job-skills trainer who runs his programs out of the college. Hollister personally recruited for his slate Deborah Canja, a former state assistant attorney general and non-profits organizer.

Among his other endeavors, Hidalgo, a long-time union steward, steers "CRAFT," a program bent on introducing Lansing-area high schoolers to employable trade skills. Coincidentally or not, a 30-second television commercial introducing the area to CRAFT is appearing on at least one local TV news telecast. The ad, paid for by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local union, prominently features Hidalgo, but isn't being reported to the county clerk as a campaign ad because it never uses the words "support" or "vote for." Hidalgo's official campaign literature, the material speaking to his participation in the governor's "Cherry Commission" on Higher Education, is predominately being covered by the \$3,500 donated by the Plumber and Pipefitters Union Local 333.

Meanwhile, no member of "the slate" is using UAW Cap Council money since the purse is tied to a condition that it can only be used to promote all three of its preferred candidates and Hollister's slate does not include all three.

Rather, Hollister, Woods and Canja are using \$2,000 each from the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's political action committee, as well as money from Hollister's father, former Lansing Mayor David Hollister, and Capital Bancorp CEO Joseph Reid, among others to put out their message.

The group also is backed by former Lansing City Council President Larry Meyer, public relations guru Kelly Rossman, MSU Board of Trustees Chairman Joel Ferguson and other prominent

Lansing citizens who were generally unimpressed with the way in which Laverty & Co. threw former LCC President Paula Cunningham under the bus in 2006, allegedly for not doing enough about a faulty student enrollment computer program.

Yet, it was stressed to me by one member that the slate is truly about working with and not against Laverty and the rest of the board. "This is not a clean-house slate. This is not a vendetta."

Hollister finished second in last year's six-person Democratic primary for state representative. He was appointed in April to fill former LCC Board member Tim Brannan's unexpired term. The Eastern High graduate served six years in the U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps, 10 years as an ordained minister and the last few years building homes for the poor.

Woods, the spokesman for the Michigan Department of Management and Budget, is a former board member at Lake Michigan Community College in Benton Harbor and a former instructor. Like Hollister, he's received endorsements from just about everyone who's done face-to-face endorsements with the exception of the Lansing State Journal.

Canja is a commercial real estate leasing agent who runs Bridges4Kids, a non-profit designed to hook up children's services for inquiring parents.

The other two candidates running for the two-year term are former Republican county commission candidate Matt Muxlow, a state legislative staffer, and Martha Finn, an Eaton County career preparation instructor with 32 years' education experience. The latter is backed by current board member K.P. Pelleran. Both are spending less than \$1,000 on their campaigns.

Outside of Woods and Hollister, the main contenders for the two six-year posts include Patrick Boog, a Haslett attorney who put \$2,000 of his own money into his unsuccessful 2003 board run; John Roy Castillo, executive director of Cristo Rey Community Center; Eastern High School Principal Pamela Diggs; and Dale Springer, an East Lansing former administrative law judge supported by current board member Tom Rasmussen.

Two other candidates showed up at the League of Women's Voter forum, Lisa Alicea, a Michigan Department of Community Health employee; and Vincenzo Corazza, an Iraqi War veteran who suggested the board go through boot camp-like training.

Others appearing on the ballot include attorney Damian Fisher, Lansing School District employee Jose Gamez, Timothy O'Rourke and Brian Shoaf.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



ISMAEL AHMED
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet or Colleen Steinman (517) 373-7394

Children's Trust Fund marks 25th anniversary with fundraiser *U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow is honored guest*

November 1, 2007

The Children's Trust Fund will mark its 25th anniversary Nov. 2 with a fundraiser honoring U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, who sponsored Michigan's landmark legislation creating the trust fund.

The event will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the home of Ron and Heather Boji in Orchard Lake. General tickets are \$100, and sponsorship opportunities range from \$250 to \$5,000. A special sponsor reception will be held beginning at 5:30 p.m. Tickets and sponsorships may be purchased by calling 1-800-CHILDREN or 517-373-4320.

As a Michigan lawmaker, Stabenow sponsored Public Act 250 of 1982 which was later signed into law by then-Gov. William Milliken. In doing so, Michigan was the first state in the nation with a dedicated child abuse prevention organization and funded solely through donations, including a check-off box on Michigan state income tax forms.

"The consequences of child abuse and neglect are as tragic and costly as they were 25 years ago," Stabenow said. "This 25th anniversary celebration is one important way that people can take positive action to address this critical problem."

Dedicated to preventing child abuse and neglect, the Children's Trust Fund works in partnership with local councils in Michigan's 83 counties. Local councils are independent, community-based organizations that identify needs and facilitate collaborative prevention programs for children and families in their community. Through these efforts, an estimated eight million Michigan children have been spared the fate of abuse and neglect.

"The generosity of donors have helped keep millions of Michigan children safe," said Richard Bearup, executive director of the Children's Trust Fund. "Continued support will help us continue to grow and serve more children in the next 25 years."

For more information go to www.michigan.gov/dhs or www.michigan.gov/ctf